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Author(s): Sharon T. Strocchia

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*Edited by*
RONA GOFFEN BRIDGET GELLERT LYONS

*Associate Editors*
COLIN EISLER WALLACE T. MACCAFFREY

# *Remembering the Family: Women, Kin, and Commemorative Masses in Renaissance Florence**

*by* SHARON T. STROCCHIA

In August 1465 Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, mother of the art patron and builder Filippo Strozzi, arranged for an annual set of masses in the parish church of Santa Maria Ughi. Her purpose, as she said, was to commemorate the souls of "all our dead," "tutti e nostri passati" (*sic*). In her record of the commission, Alessandra carefully outlined the conditions of the bequest. She noted, for example, the location of the land donation whose proceeds subsidized the masses and the day the ten masses were to be performed, and made alternate arrangements should the priests of Santa Maria Ughi fail to uphold their obligations. Yet within this context of legal specifications and formulae, Alessandra remained curiously vague about one of the program's essential clauses: namely, the precise identity of "all our dead."[1]

In both their precision and ambiguity, commemorative bequests made by women like Alessandra Strozzi offer an important new observation on the Florentine family. In contrast to recent studies of family and gender in other areas of Europe, the study of Florentine kinship has been marked by the surprising absence of feminist perspectives that illuminate the relation between gender, family struc-

*I would like to thank the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Villa I Tatti), Florence, and the National Endowment for the Humanities for their generous support, and Stanley Chojnacki for his helpful comments on an earlier draft.

[1]Alessandra Macinghi-Strozzi, *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina* (Florence, 1877), 545, note B.



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ture, and the dynamics of women's power.[2] Historians have instead focused attention on such issues as the role of household versus lineage in creating a modern conjugal unit, or the demographics of family organization. Even novel work, like that analyzing the fictive kin of Florentine confraternities, has passed lightly over the issue of gender distinctions in relation to ritual kinship.[3] A feminist perspective on women and gender has recently begun to enter historical discourse on the Florentine family through the essays of Christiane Klapisch–Zuber, whose portrayal of women as displaced and disempowered nevertheless needs to be critically examined.[4]

This essay aims to redress some of these imbalances in recent historiography by asking a fundamental question: based on patterns of family remembrance, how did women in Renaissance Florence define and experience kinship as compared with their male kin? In assessing the relation between gender and kinship, commemorative masses commissioned for dead relatives offer a particularly useful source for several reasons. First, memorial masses were in themselves implicit family statements; the very act of remembrance, which reinvested the memory of dead kin among the living on a regular and formal basis, aimed at the continual integration of the kin group as it moved both backward and forward in time.[5] Second, as a source for family history, commemorative bequests help docu-

[2]The introduction by David Nicholas, *The Domestic Life of a Medieval City: Women, Children, and the Family in Fourteenth–Century Ghent* (Lincoln, NE, and London, 1985), reviews the recent interpretations of, and bibliography for, European family structures in general, with a particular emphasis on northern Europe.

[3]From the growing literature on the Florentine family, I refer here only to several divergent views and approaches: on family structures, Richard Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, NJ, 1968), and F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, NJ, 1977); on family demographics, David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch–Zuber, *Les toscans et leurs familles* (Paris, 1978), now translated as *Tuscans and their Families* (New Haven and London, 1985); on ritual kinship, Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1982). By contrast with Florentine historiography, Venetian kinship and gender issues have been ably explored by Stanley Chojnacki. See his two important articles, "Patrician Women in Early Renaissance Venice," *Studies in the Renaissance* 21 (1974): 176–203, and "Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5 (1975): 571–600. His more recent work adds an important perspective on age distinctions: "Kinship Ties and Young Patricians in Fifteenth–Century Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 240–70, and "Political Adulthood in Fifteenth–Century Venice," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 791–810.

[4]Klapisch–Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1985).

[5]Natalie Z. Davis. "Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France," *Daedalus* (spring 1977): 87–114.

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ment the elusive area of affective ties among family members, as well as delineate family organization on both the domestic and larger social level. Finally, because commemorative commissions, performances, and problems were documented by ecclesiastical institutions to which women had regular access, these church records balance the lineage–heavy pages of family diaries and throw their patrilineal messages into sharp relief.

For historians, the complexity of relations among women, kin, and commemoration is intensified by the conflicts and tensions inherent in the Florentine family system. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Florentine society faced the structural contradictions of combining a dotal system with a patrilineal one, which placed women in a highly ambiguous and vulnerable position as members of two families.[6] The contradictions in this arrangement were especially pronounced for the Florentine elite. As dowry prices spiraled upwards throughout the fifteenth century, husbands increasingly depended on the dowries their wives brought them from other lineages to provide capital for business ventures and to legitimate their social place.[7] But what husbands received, fathers had later to give. Enriched by the economic resources of their brides, husbands confronted the transfer or loss of their own patrimony when, as fathers, they dowered their daughters in an escalating marriage market. While some of these problems were resolved during the sixteenth century, when a more concentrated property entailment safeguarded dowries, in republican Florence the family represented an arena in which a powerful patrilineal ideology conflicted with social practice.[8]

[6]On problems resulting from Florentine family structures, see Klapisch–Zuber, *Women,* 117–31. On the dowry system in Florence: Julius Kirshner, "Pursuing Honor while Avoiding Sin: The Monte delle Doti of Florence," *Studi senesi* 89 (1978): 175–258. Venetian social structures mitigated to some extent against the kind of dowry wars seen in Florence; see Chojnacki, "Dowries."

[7]Kirshner and Anthony Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 403–38; Herlihy and Klapisch, *Tuscans,* 222–26.

[8]Serious attention needs to be paid to family changes during the Medici principate. For now, see Samuel Berner, "The Florentine Patriciate in the Transition from Republic to Principato, 1530–1609," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 9 (1972): 3–15. More specialized studies include Paolo Malanima, *I Riccardi di Firenze* (Florence, 1977), and Tim Carter, "Music and Patronage in Late Sixteenth–Century Florence: The Case of Jacopo Corsi (1561–1602)," *I Tatti Studies* 1 (1985): 57–104.

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The competition between the dotal and lineal faces of the family intruded not only in the economic marketplace but also behind the closed doors of domestic life. It was in the households of the urban patriciate that patrilineal ideology met the daily test of cognatic and conjugal arrangements. The conflict between family regimes worked to carve out a central social position for patrician women, on the one hand, and to fragment their social identity on the other. Women wove and continued to sustain a powerful web of family relationships through marriage and the creation of *parentado.* Yet this same central position also exerted competing claims on a woman's status and affection in everyday life. As daughters, patrician women depended on paternal wealth for the dowry that guaranteed their status as wives.[9] Should they be widowed, custom granted them the right of returning to their natal fold, but often at the expense of abandoning the children born in their conjugal union.[10] The economic needs of a dotal and lineal system both created and confused ties of affection between fathers and daughters, husbands and wives. Although the Florentine family system was governed by a patrilineal ideology, family life itself was characterized by tensions between economic and affective relations.

Moreover, Florentine demographic patterns fostered a tangle of family relationships that often made kinship temporary and somewhat vague. Late marriages for men, around age thirty–two for a first marriage, coupled with a relatively low life expectancy, truncated the conjugal experience for many Florentine males. Although women married at the much younger age of about sixteen to eighteen, the high incidence of death in childbirth commonly shortened the length of their natural and married lives. Patrician women under about age forty who survived childbirth and who outlived their husbands frequently remarried. These second or even third marriages created a new set of alliances that further served their natal families' purposes and that further confused kin relationships.[11] In this society of multiple marriages, where women both bound and broke patrilines, kinship was a critical yet tenuous bond.

[9]Diane Owen Hughes makes a similar point in connection with women's clothing in her article "Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy," 69–99 in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West,* ed. John Bossy (Cambridge, 1983).

[10]Klapisch–Zuber, *Women,* 117–31.

[11]Ibid., 120–21; Herlihy and Klapisch–Zuber, *Tuscans,* 202–31.

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Given these competing family claims, my first objective in this essay is to explore what commemorative patterns reveal about gender–based experiences of kinship, including conflicts in family allegiances and affiliations. In particular, I want to focus on women's response to their splintered social identity as part of two or even three families by comparing their commemorative patterns with those of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. To what extent did women's visions of the family they remembered correspond to the family pictures of their male kinsmen? Second, I want to explore the problem of family structure and sentiment from a different perspective by examining how commemorative masses to some extent resolved conflicts in family relationships. What I hope to suggest in the course of the essay is not a single historical model of the Florentine family but rather multiple, complex representations that describe the actual and idealized human relations of both women and men.

* * * * *

In one important sense, the commemorative habits of Florentine men and women were remarkably similar. From a numerical standpoint, the cultural imperative to honor kin through masses was experienced by and available to both men and women in roughly equal proportions. Between 1360 and 1500, women sponsored about half the total number of perpetual programs established at ecclesiastical institutions scattered throughout the city. The confraternity of San Pier Martire, one of the oldest and wealthiest laud–singing companies in the city, for example, listed thirty–seven women and thirty–six men among its donors when the group compiled a commemorative ledger in 1423. Of the ninety programs listed in the company's 1427 Catasto report, forty–nine (54%) had been instituted by men and forty–one (46%) by women.[12] The endowment records of the Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore describe a world similarly balanced between genders. Between 1367 and 1488, twenty–nine women and twenty–seven men commissioned a total of fifty–four perpetual programs at the convent.[13] This gender equation,

[12]Unless otherwise noted, all manuscripts cited are housed in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF). See Conventi Religiosi Soppressi, 102, vol. 326. Testaments of San Pier Martire, 1421–1423; Catasto, vol. 185, fols. 763–796v.

[13]San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38 (Summary of Obligations and Charges). According to the preface (unpaginated), this compilation was made in 1668 in order "to know the origins and foundations of all the [convent's] obligations," since some programs had to be

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with women enjoying a high profile as commemorative sponsors, continued into the latter part of the fifteenth century, giving evidence of the continued availability of arenas in which women exercised power.[14]

For both sexes, the act of reproducing the family and expressing the self through commemoration was framed by the opportunities afforded by family, vocation, and class. The cost of perpetual programs, ranging from one to five florins annually, placed perpetual masses well beyond the reach of Florence's *minori,* who comprised about half the city's population in 1427.[15] In contrast to the expensive, socially restricted nature of perpetual commissions in late medieval England or in late sixteenth–century Muenster and Lyons, however, skilled artisans and small tradesmen in fifteenth–century Florence could afford perpetual programs of a simple kind.[16] The cooper Giovanni di Torsellino endowed a small program at San Pancrazio in 1427, for example, while the 1423 ledger of San Pier Martire naming thirty–six male donors included three notaries, three

scaled down "because their income was not sufficient." Although the preface states that the present book was based on older ledgers of mass obligations initially made in 1351, followed by a subsequent compilation of perpetual programs done in 1507, it appears that neither of these preceding documents has survived.

[14]Detailed evidence from San Pier Martire is instructive here. Of the ninety programs the company reported in its 1427 Catasto return, sixty–six were still active in 1478; twenty–four programs had failed because of insufficient funding. The group of discontinued offices included thirteen celebrations sponsored by men and eleven by women; that is, perpetual programs at San Pier Martire lapsed in almost exact proportion to the gender composition of donors reported in 1427. Between 1427 and 1478 the company experienced a net loss of nine programs, as only fifteen new perpetual commissions (six made by men, nine by women) were instituted. The gender profile of perpetual donors in 1478 was thus remarkably similar to the company's portrait of fifty years earlier, with forty–two of eighty–one bequests (51.8%) made by men and thirty–nine (48.1%) by women. Catasto, vol. 185, fols. 763–796v; vol. 989, fols. 670–679v.

[15]This equation is based on the figure of fourteen florins set by Catasto officials as the annual minimum cost of living for a single adult: Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore and London, 1980), 348; on the distribution of wealth in Florentine society, see Herlihy and Klapisch–Zuber, *Tuscans,* 104.

[16]R. Po–chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Munster, 1535–1618* (New Haven and London, 1984), 195–96, argues that memorial masses were not commonly requested in late sixteenth–century wills because a perpetual program required 500 guldens or dalers, "a figure out of reach for over ninety percent of the faithful." Examples of mass costs in sixteenth–century Lyons, which were less onerous than in Muenster but still more expensive than in Florence, are given by Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), 292, n. 25. Perpetual programs made by and for the English aristocracy are discussed by J. T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise* (London, 1972), and in a more general way by K. L. Wood–Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965).

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friars, two second-hand dealers, a swordmaker, spicer, and five others lacking surnames (including two seemingly wealthy merchants), along with prestigious merchants, bankers, and magnates like the Tornaquinci, Bardi, and della Tosa.[17]

The field of opportunities in which Florentine women made their commemorative choices was structured by different economic conditions. The limited role of women as paid wage-earners, especially in the cloth industry, coupled with meager earnings derived from the traditional female occupations of midwifery, wet nursing, and domestic service, stymied women's abilities to accumulate independently the savings necessary for perpetual patronage.[18] This meant that women donors were drawn from a more uniformly elite group of professional and propertied families than their male counterparts. In contrast to the sizeable numbers of male artisans and tradesmen active as perpetual sponsors, wives and widows of the artisan class were greatly overshadowed in commemorative pursuits by their more affluent, propertied women neighbors.[19]

Paradoxically, however, the Florentine economic system established common ground among women donors. Whether acting as productive but unpaid helpers in the workshops of husbands, brothers, and fathers, as household managers, or as widows wielding power over considerable fortunes, women earned and exercised their economic capabilities within a family context. Their contribu-

[17]For Giovanni di Torsellino, Catasto, vol. 43, fols. 798–800v, at fol. 800, whose office cost the equivalent of 1.45 florins. All lire to florin conversions are based on Goldthwaite, *Building,* app. 1. For San Pier Martire, Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fols. 1–37.

[18]Judith C. Brown, "A Woman's Place Was in the Home: Women's Work in Renaissance Tuscany," 206–24 in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe,* ed. M. Ferguson, M. Quilligan, and N. Vickers (Chicago, 1986). For a demographic and economic profile of wet nurses and domestic servants in Florence, see Klapisch-Zuber, *Women,* 132–77. As a problem for future research, it would be highly informative to compare Florentine women's commemorative patterns with their counterparts in northern European cities where, according to the recent work of Martha Howell and Merry Wiesner, women had a greater role in the urban economy as wage laborers.

[19]Conv. Sopp, 102, vol. 326, fols. 1–37, which lists thirty-seven women donors: three are identified as notaries' wives, one as a notary's daughter, and one woman only as a tertiary. The remaining women, who had hazier vocational associations, were nevertheless all identified by their surnames, including a large number from such prestigious families as the Alberti, Altoviti, Ardinghelli, Pazzi, Ricci, Rossi, Strozzi, and Tornaquinci. About 60% of these women can be securely identified as widows, which may have enhanced the autonomy with which they disposed of their goods. See also San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, which identifies seven out of twenty-nine women as having artisan backgrounds.

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tions, limited in terms of wage-earning by the conditions of the marketplace, were ultimately transmitted to wealthy women and artisans alike in the form of dowry and inheritance.[20] It was on these family resources, rather than on wages, that women of varying status relied for their patronage activities. The butcher's widow Lisa used the inheritance from her father's smithy shop to establish a bequest at San Pier Maggiore in 1435, for example, just as her fellow parishioner, the patrician widow Tita d'Antonio Alessandri, consigned parts of her dowry to the same church thirteen years later.[21] Regardless of their status, women were deeply embedded in the conditions and circumstances of a family economy.

When men and women mapped their family experience and constructed strategies for projecting kin ties into the future, then, they worked within a different range of structured opportunities for, and dependencies on, family and corporate associations.[22] In order to explore systematically how each gender group responded to their particular options and circumstances, we can combine an in-depth analysis of a single group of testators with a broader sampling of perpetual mass commissions. What follows is based on the activities of seventy-three donors who established programs at the old, wealthy *laudesi* confraternity of San Pier Martire, primarily between 1360 and 1419, plus a larger sampling of 158 other perpetual mass commissions drawn from five ecclesiastical institutions.[23] Rather than tracing a simple patrilineal family model, these commemorative designs, especially those established by the San Pier Martire bequests, followed the contours of a complex kin map, including its frayed edges, that wives and daughters helped to draw.

[20]Jack Goody, "Inheritance, Property, and Women," 10–36 in idem, et al., eds., *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976).

[21]San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 74, 95.

[22]Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France," 53–63 in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought,* ed. T. Heller, M. Sosna, and D. Wellbery (Stanford, 1986).

[23]For San Pier Martire, see Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326. Under the directive of Pope Eugenius IV, who resided at Santa Maria Novella during his Florentine sojourn, the company was reorganized in the late 1430s and early 1440s, after which some of its finances and obligations were assumed by the friars. The larger sample is drawn from the following sources: Santa Maria Novella, sixty-one programs (Conv. Sopp., 102, vols. 105, 106, pts. 1 and 2); San Pancrazio, four programs (Conv. Sopp., 88, vol. 65); San Pier Maggiore, seventy-five programs (San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38); Santo Spirito, eleven programs (Conv. Sopp., 122, vol. 75); and Santa Trinita, seven programs (Conv. Sopp., 89, vols. 15, 47, 75).

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If we begin our exploration of family topography with the conventional orientation of the conjugal pair, commemorative bequests reveal a problematic center. As Leon Battista Alberti cautioned husbands in his treatise on the family, the loyalty of wives with their own powerful family traditions was suspect; patrician wives might use the power of both goods and gossip to further the interests of their natal kin over those of their newly-acquired marital relatives.[24] The donors of San Pier Martire embedded these tensions in their bequests to a far greater extent than they celebrated a conjugal ideal. Only five of the twenty-one women who were certainly widows commissioned masses that specifically included their dead husbands. In fact, Filippa, the widow of Messer Jacopo del Biada, pointedly excluded her husband from her commemorative designs. By her will of August 1400, Filippa set aside 100 florins from her goods to finance three memorial offices annually with the company: one for herself, one for her father, and one for her son.[25] For Filippa, commemoration was a way to exclude rather than to embrace. That these tensions were particularly pronounced among the Florentine elite is suggested by a number of bequests made at other institutions by wives of lesser social status, who singled out their husbands for remembrance. While the number of bequests is too small to derive any clear-cut class patterns, the more limited family tradition of women like the scrap dealer's widow Antonia, donating property to San Pier Maggiore in 1415, may have focused increased attention and sentiment on the spousal relationship.[26]

Judging from their commemorative choices, husbands also experienced these conjugal strains, perhaps to an even greater degree than did their wives. Of the thirty-six men making bequests at San Pier Martire, only one man established a program expressly commemorating his wife, and he did so in a bequest made jointly with his daughter.[27] Records from other institutions document a similar in-

[24] *I Libri della famiglia,* ed. R. Romano and A. Tenenti (Turin, 1969).

[25] Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 26v.

[26] San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 68, dated 25 December 1415. The intentions of bequests like the one made by Niccolosa, widow of Ser Alberto Tigliamochi in 1468 are more difficult to decipher. Niccolosa stipulated separate offices for herself and her husband, rather than a single joint celebration; Conv. Sopp. 102, vol. 106, pt. 2, unpaginated, dated 5 August 1468.

[27] Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 13v. This bequest, dated 23 January 1387, was made by Giovanni di Giano, a wealthy *setaiuolo* of the parish of San Pancrazio, and his

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frequency of perpetual commissions, although wives figure more prominently in limited anniversary programs made for ten or twenty–five years. In casting their long–range commemorative designs, husbands, particularly of the elite, often commissioned masses remembering "all their dead," a term that presumably captured wives in its collective net but which nevertheless left them unnamed. Here again class differences are suggestive of a more intensive concentration on the marital unit among artisans, although the evidence is by no means conclusive.[28]

There were several important contingencies contributing to this rather remarkable lack of commemorative bonding between spouses, especially for husbands, that deserve consideration. Commemorative records are littered with cases like that of Andrea Spinelli, a second–hand dealer testating in 1393, who assigned the usufruct of endowments to their wives during their lifetimes, after which the property reverted to the institution.[29] In these instances, husbands directed the immediate fruits of material goods to their wives instead of projecting long-term symbolic remembrance. Moreover, patrician husbands who married women from equally prestigious lineages at times were correct in assuming that their wives might establish independent commemorative programs using their often formidable dotal resources.[30] It would be foolhardy to dismiss the possibilities of affection between spouses expressed in myriad other ways or to neglect in future studies the "power of love" in transforming conjugal and gender relationships over time, subjects about which we know all too little.[31] Nevertheless, the limited conjugal enthusiasm demonstrated in commemorative be-

daughter Monna Agnesa, the wife of Niccolò di Marco Alberti; the ledger notes that Agnesa made the donation "con consentimento del padre e del marito."

[28]For example, see the 1386 bequest celebrating his marital union by the stonecutter Zanobi di Pacino and a bequest made the previous year by his neighbor in San Pier Maggiore from a more powerful notarial family, Piero di Ser Spigliato da Filicaia; San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 1, 9.

[29]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 19v.

[30]See, for example, the programs established in the late fourteenth century at San Pier Martire by Nepo della Tosa and his widow Bicia: Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fols. 155, 169.

[31]See the intriguing possibilities for inquiry posed by Chojnacki, "The Power of Love: Wives and Husbands in Late Medieval Venice," 126–48 in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA, 1988).

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quests argues against the view that fifteenth–century Florence provided a birthplace for an emergent modern family.

In exploring the portrayal of conjugal sentiment in commemorative records, we must also consider the different ways husbands and wives attempted to insert themselves into the larger community. For artisans and affluent Florentines alike, kin sentiment was inextricably bound with divergent personal and family strategies that were grounded in the practical realities of gender experience. Men's commemorative programs, which paid relatively scant attention to the conjugal bond, were often bound with a set of overtly public concerns. Testating in July 1413, for example, the scrap dealer Chimenti di Stefano prescribed a celebration at San Pier Maggiore on the feast of his name saint, to be followed by a memorial mass for himself the next day. By opting for a public feast and an alliance with his spiritual protector, Chimenti propelled himself into a larger system of parish patronage and piety. Here commemoration served an outward–looking public purpose that enabled this successful artisan to enhance his reputation even after death. Two years later, his widow Antonia opted for a sharply contrasting program in which different strategies and considerations seemed to be at work. Once her husband had opened up access to larger civic and spiritual arenas, Antonia capitalized upon his actions by ordering a mass said on Chimenti's burial day which jointly honored their memories.[32] In representing herself as a wife, Antonia devised a complementary strategy, particularly useful given her status as an artisan's widow, that took full advantage of her husband's choices while remaining attentive to her conjugal attachment. If wives, especially of the artisan class, paid somewhat greater homage to the conjugal bond, it may be as indicative of the different options and strategies available to men and women to meet personal, family, and public purposes as it was a reflection of marital sentiment.

A similarly complex convergence of strategies and affection operated in bequests remembering children as well as spouses. Considering that several historians have argued that the fifteenth–century Florentine family was being transformed by strong bonds of domestic affection, however, the number of commissions specifi-

[32]San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 68, 94.

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cally embracing children or descendants is surprisingly small.[33] This is not to say that children did not figure into testamentary provisions in a variety of other contexts; fathers often made special financial arrangements for daughters, especially in the event of widowhood, while sons were frequently called upon to act as executors. Nevertheless, men rarely named sons, daughters, or descendants in their commemorative bequests, either individually or in general terms. Instead, male donors more frequently incorporated sons into their commemorative designs by asking them to participate at celebratory meals (*pietanze*) following the mass. As with conjugal strategies, commemoration involving this kind of participation was often made to serve a practical public purpose for men. Memorial banquets focused homage on the figure of the testator himself, and cast him as having initiated or successfully perpetuated a lineage.

The possibility of projecting oneself in the role of respected ancestor may have seemed particularly attractive to rising artisans like the smithy Dazino di Gualberto, who invited his son to bring along twelve of his friends to the annual banquet. Similarly, the swordmaker Gieri di Michele, one of three men formulating such lineal designs at San Pier Martire, asked that his male heirs be invited to share in the annual festivities; Bernardo Bardi wanted at least one of his sons or close relatives to attend his offertory meal, while Messer Tommaso Falconi asserted the most lineal intentions of all. Testating in 1383, Falconi conjoined the remembrance of his father with himself in the annual mass; the meal that followed honored all his grandfather's descendants and could be attended by all the founder's male heirs and progeny.[34] Ironically, Falconi's lineal scheme floundered in the succeeding generation. The San Pier Martire 1427 Catasto report noted that "because his heirs haven't paid, they are

[33]Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800,* abridged ed. (New York, 1979), 420; Goldthwaite, "The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 977–1012, and, more generally, his *Private Wealth.* Marvin Becker has also argued for a progressive nuclearization of the Florentine family in the fifteenth century, although in different terms than Stone's "affective domesticity," in "Individualism in the Early Italian Renaissance: Burden and Blessing," *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972): 273–97. Kent, *Household,* esp. 230, criticizes Goldthwaite's views on architectural changes as a response to a growing desire for domestic privacy. The positions on family development taken by both Goldthwaite and Kent are criticized by Anthony Molho, "Visions of the Florentine Family in the Renaissance," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 304–11.

[34]For Dazino di Gualberto, Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 106, pt. 2, unfoliated, dated 14 October 1360; for the San Pier donations, Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fols. 14, 28, 32.

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our debtors," and further added that "this bequest has given us nothing, because his heirs are beginning litigation. They say that they are not bound beyond what they wish to give, and for many years they have given us nothing. One must dispute with them, and so it remains pending."[35] Despite the resistance of his descendants, Falconi had at least transmitted his own message about the value of lineal strength and solidarity in his original commission.

Given the conventional association of women with a domestic context, it is perhaps surprising to find that women were only slightly more likely than their kinsmen to target children or progeny as commemorative recipients. Three women among the San Pier donors expressly included their offspring in their memorial programs, although there were somewhat more bequests scattered at other institutions, especially near the end of the fifteenth century.[36] Despite the relatively few instances of filial inclusion on the part of both sexes, women nevertheless involved their children in a markedly different way than their husbands and kinsmen when designing such programs. Rather than establishing themselves as objects of filial homage or as persons aligned along a venerable lineal axis, wives and mothers firmly embedded themselves in the nuclear group that they themselves created. That is, women portrayed themselves in a different relational context that, rather than isolating them as matriarchs, instead sustained their personalized connection to husband and children. Unlike Falconi's sweeping lineal projection, the program established in 1373 by Simona Alamanni, widow of Gentile Altoviti, commemorating herself, her husband, and her children in a single celebration, simultaneously located her in an immediate conjugal context of her own making and enmeshed her with these relations forever. The conjugal family conceived by Dadda di Ser Francesco, widow of Ugo Gherardi, revolved to an even greater extent around her as its central figure. In her endowment to San Pier Maggiore made around 1373, Dadda stipulated an annual mass hon-

[35]Catasto, vol. 185, fol. 772: "Questo lascio non metto nulla perche muovano lite lerede e dicono non essere tenuti piu che selvoglino fare e assai anni non gli danno assi a piatire alloro e pero rimane pendente." The bishop's court decided in favor of the company, however, and the bequest was once again active by 1478. Catasto, vol. 989, fols. 670–679v.

[36]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fols. 10v, 20, 26v. It is worth mentioning that, although a child who predeceased his or her parents must have prompted the commemorative impulse, there was nothing to prevent a living person or kin group from being named as part of a commemorative intention.

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oring herself, her husband, and her son Agabito to be celebrated on the self–referential occasion of her own death day.[37] It was precisely in their dual roles as wives and mothers, the nexus of the family group that accompanied them, that these programs projected their female sponsors into the public arena.

These divergent gender connections to kin are yet more pronounced in commemorative programs binding men and women to family relations outside the nuclear unit. Women positioned themselves as the structural nexus not only within but between families by commissioning bequests for their natal kin. Despite the legal and prescriptive inroads made by a patrilineal model, programs binding a lineage and its daughters document the persistence of bilateral kin networks and suggest the ways by which daughters recognized allegiance to their fathers and family of origin, whose wealth in the form of dowry often made patronage possible.[38] Natal ties animated a variety of San Pier Martire bequests, such as the donation made in May 1455 by Gostanza Berti, who donated a farm from her dowry to the company to subsidize an annual mass and meal for herself and her ancestors. Gostanza also elected burial in her father's tomb in Santa Maria Novella rather than the more typical burial site of her husband's enclosure, choosing, in effect, to remain a permanent daughter of her lineage.[39] An Albizzi widow, Monna Jacopa, opted for a different strategy to maintain connection with her natal clan of the Michi. In her will of July 1430, Jacopa bequeathed the income from her 300–florin Monte credit to the friars of Santa Maria Novella to pay for an annual office benefitting her and her descendants.[40] She also charged the friars to invite one or two members of the "domo et famiglia" of her natal kin to the memorial banquet celebrated on her death day. Should these kin be unable to attend, the friars were obliged to go to their house and pay them homage by offering a pair of geese or ten pounds of veal. In design-

[37]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 20; San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 59. Villana de' Rossi, widow of Stoldo Lensi, defined herself as a mother by reversing the conventional formula. In her 1444 testament, Villana left a house to the Compagnia del Tempio to finance her memorial program, provided that the executor never, under any conditions, cede any rights to her son Lodovico or to his children. Villana's will is printed in Stefano Orlandi, *Necrologio di S. Maria Novella* (Florence, 1955) 2:232.

[38]Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1985), 83.

[39]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 106, pt. 2, unfoliated, dated 23 May 1455.

[40]Ibid., dated 1 July 1430.

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ing this comprehensive program, Jacopa carried allegiance to her natal family with her as she launched her family arrow forward in time.

It was not only natal kin whom women remembered in commemorative bequests, however, but a wide range of relations who represented both structural and personalized ties. Judging from their commemorative patterns, the complex and often competing associations of the Florentine family system offered women, especially of the elite, a greater number of structured possibilities for kinship and a broader range of representations than they did their kinsmen. By virtue of continually shifting household arrangements and women's central yet liminal status in patriliny, women were at greater liberty to recognize more attentively the structures and accidents of their social experience and to personalize their remembrance accordingly. The agility and variety with which women moved both within and across family units resulted in a plurality of overlapping identities that reflected women's experience as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. Among the San Pier Martire donors, for example, the sisters Inghilesca and Tessina, daughters of Bartolo Corsi, established their identity as siblings in perpetuity by conjoining their remembrance in a common mass program, while Lisa Strozzi and her daughter-in-law Dragoncina, having been brought together from different families by marriage, memorialized their shared experience by instituting a joint celebration for themselves in 1418. Two serving women for the convent of San Pier Maggiore created a kin-like connection reflective of their personal circumstances by setting up a shared program in 1450.[41]

This rich variety of kinship was also expressed among the executors women chose to implement their bequests. In making decisions about the transfer of property and the entrustment of memory, both sexes had to confront varying contingencies and personal circumstances; moreover, a woman's legal actions were subject to the approval of a male legal guardian (*mundualdus*).[42] Despite legal prescriptions, however, commemorative records portray women as

[41]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fols. 8v, 97; San Pier Maggiore, vol. 38, 96.

[42]On the legal status of women in late medieval and Renaissance Florence, Thomas Kuehn, " 'Cum Consensu Mundualdi': Legal Guardianship of Women in Quattrocento Florence," *Viator* 13 (1982): 309–33; idem, "Women, Marriage, and *Patria Potestas* in Late Medieval Florence," *Revue d'histoire du droit* 49 (1981): 127–47. Kirshner discusses the legal claims of wives and their natal families in "Wives' Claims against Insolvent Husbands in Late Medieval Italy," 256–303 in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. idem and S. Wemple (Oxford, 1985).

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remarkably autonomous agents who chose as executors not only their legally powerful male kin, such as husbands, sons, and agnates, but also a diverse range of female relatives. One of the San Pier donors, the widowed Monna Ghingha, for instance, integrally arranged her memorial program in 1393 around the joint revenues and cooperation of her daughter, granddaughter, and sister, women of different generations who shared her blood as the common link.[43] This affective alliance among women, manifested in gifts of clothing and other property transferred within and across generations, probably turned in part on the nature of female sociability, which largely revolved around other women. Some of these designations, however, may have involved strategy as much as sociability. That is, women may have turned to a variety of female relations not only out of necessity, affection, or familiarity, but also to help them circumvent the expectations of kinsmen and the larger community. Daughters could utilize the power of their married families, while sisters might tap the strength of a natal kin group to offset the power and purposes of a husband's lineage. In other words, women could turn the structural complexity of their family position to their advantage in reinforcing personal preferences and choices. In favoring her three daughters as executors over other male relations in 1405, for example, the widowed Lapaccia Ardinghelli may have wished to involve them in asserting Dominican patronage preferences over the local Vallombrosians of Santa Trinita, with whom her husband's family enjoyed a longstanding association. Given that Lapaccia was mistakenly buried in her husband's tomb in 1406 and had to be disinterred and reburied in the Dominican enclave of Santa Maria Novella according to her testamentary instructions, she may have had good reason to enlist her daughters' aid in her commemorative plans.[44] In conjoining strategy and sentiment with wide-ranging structural possibilities, women created family ties and models that significantly deviated from and that, to some extent, challenged the assumptions of, patriliny and patriarchal culture.

[43]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 25r-v. By 1427 this program had encountered financial difficulties, but was once again active by 1478: Catasto, vol. 185, fol. 778; Catasto, vol. 989, fol. 678v.

[44]For Lapaccia's bequest, Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 32v. The mistaken burial was noted by the abbot of Santa Trinita: "facto chiaro come la detta mona Lapaccia per suo testamento era giudicata a Santa Maria Novella rendemo il corpo et della cera che mi rimase di coscientia di Maestro Ubertino priore di Santa Maria Novella." Whether her daughters intervened is not clear from this text. Conv. Sopp., 89, vol. 10, fol. 5.

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These nuanced representations and their underlying strategies prompt us to consider how women's "private" memory became a means to public identity. What may appear as merely private strategies for remembrance were publicly legitimated, first by witnesses to the testamentary act, and later by repeated performance of the offices themselves. For commemorative sponsors, the activities surrounding remembrance, especially by a confraternity, offered the secular recognition of a much wider circle of intimates than the household and immediate parish networks afforded; donors were thanked at confraternal lauds and at the meals that often followed the memorial service. Commemorative patronage thus helped extend the realm of women's sociability. Moreover, when the names of women's beneficiaries were enrolled in books of perpetual obligations and later recited at masses, women's family visions assumed the status of public statements, publicly witnessed and publicly reiterated. Shut out from the world of civic patronage, Florentine women nevertheless created their own history of the family as patrons of the dead.

By contrast with their kinswomen, men demonstrated in their commemorative commissions no formalized allegiance to kin outside the conjugal household or lineage. The strength of a patrilineal model that privileged men's position, activities and choices in the public world seems to have flattened the larger expressive possibilities of kinship offered by Florentine family arrangements. Men exhibited only a weak conceptual affiliation with their mothers or maternal family in both perpetual and short-term commemorative offerings. For example, of nineteen single–mass commissions made by sons at San Pancrazio between 1446 and 1464 to honor their parents, twelve were intended for fathers, five for mothers, and only one for both parents.[45] Nor did husbands reach out to embrace their marital relations in any significant numbers, or join together in cooperative ventures that reflected the vagaries of household arrangements; the single joint program involving a male donor at San Pier Martire, for example, was established by a father and daughter to honor the woman who bound them as wife and mother.[46] As a practical matter, brothers, uncles, nephews and cousins were far more willing to cross boundaries of households and generations in ful-

[45]Conv. Sopp., 88, vol. 23.
[46]Conv. Sopp., 102, vol. 326, fol. 13v.

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filling the testamentary wishes of others, often those of their kinswomen, than they were to knit themselves permanently into those relationships in memorial programs. Paradoxically, the lineal association that served men of both established and aspiring lineages so well in the public world seems to have reduced men's options for realizing the full complexity of kinship when making commemorative choices.

These strategies, behaviors, and patterns of representation offer a framework in which to approach the common but conceptually problematic designation of masses remembering one's collective family dead. Among the San Pier donors, seven men and ten women wanted their bequests to honor "all their dead," usually phrased as "tutti i suoi morti," "suorum," or simply "i suoi." This intention was among the most frequent in commemorative bequests as a whole, common to both men and women, artisans and the elite. The designation "et suorum" also figured in corporate as well as in domestic commemoration, being capaciously defined in the 1431 confraternal statutes of San Niccolò da Bari to include "the fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, and every other relation (*congiunto*) of our company."[47]

While we can only guess whether men intended a similar inclusiveness when using this phrase, there are several reasons to think that the designation of "i suoi" in men's bequests had a more restricted lineal and conjugal grounding than implied in this confraternal definition. The family relations men specifically named in their bequests strongly suggest their primary, and somewhat limited, focus on the elemental structures of household and lineage. Furthermore, in his 1734 discussion of Florentine tomb rights, Giovanvincenzo de' Fantoni interpreted the phrase "et suorum" to have precisely this limited meaning for men who established family tombs. Reviewing a number of fourteenth– and fifteenth–century examples, Fantoni compared the respective meanings of *suorum, heredum, descendentium, filiorum,* and *consortium* commonly inscribed on tomb slabs. In Fantoni's view, "this word 'suorum' was intended in a generic sense by reason of its capacity to embrace and to invite to tomb privileges all the agnates and their spouses of the founder,

[47]Compagnie Religiose Soppresse di Firenze, Capitoli, vol. 439, fol. 6: "E anchora ordiniamo che simile rinovale si faccia ongni [*sic*] anno del mese di genaio per tutti i nostri morti cioe padri e madre [*sic*] e frategli e sirocchie e figliuoli e ogni altro congiunto di nostra conpagnia."

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of whatever line they happened to be."[48] That is, Fantoni defined "suorum" in a lineal and conjugal way that closely paralleled the kin ties outlined in men's specified bequests. Fantoni further argued that if the term "suorum" had not been purposely intended to mean the lineage, including those women assimilated into the house through marriage, founders would have selected more specific kinship terms.

Rather than tying this phrase to a single meaning, however, I want to suggest that "i suoi" also served the useful purpose of masking family frictions. Remembering all one's dead allowed men to project an image of lineal harmony and smooth over whatever problems, animosities, and disputes wracked the internal workings of the patriline. By making common cause with their ancient family dead, men could allude to their heritage, contribute to the collective effort to enhance both material and spiritual patrimony, while setting themselves off as individual patrons and protectors. Invocations of "i suoi" also had practical applications in tomb disputes between families, where the symbolic weight of all one's dead helped legally guard the identity, values, and tombs of a patriline, as when Marco Parenti successfully used the inscription and emblems of "i suoi" to defend an abandoned family tomb in Santa Croce in 1474.[49]

For women, who tended to cast their family net more widely in named bequests, the remembrance of all one's dead may also have had idealizing intentions, but ones that were perhaps put to different purposes than those of their kinsmen. The contradictions of the Florentine family system meant that, if women stood at the center of a tangled web of domestic relationships, they also ran the risk of being excluded by those relations; if they could belong to two families, they could also belong to neither. Widows, both young and old,

[48]ASF, Archivio Bardi, ser. 3, vol. 132, bk. 3, "Discorso sopra l'ius sepolcrale delle famiglie," fols. 112–20, at fol. 112: "Questa parola suorum si dovesse ragionevolmente intendere per generica, et per capace di abbracciare e d'invitare all'Ius del Sepolcro tutti gli Agnati e Consorti del Fondatore, di qualunque linea eziandio che fussero eglino, e che non debba intendersi per ristretta a i soli suoi figliuoli, o agli eredi di lui stesso, o a i suoi discendenti solamente, e non ad altri della stirpe." Michael Rocke kindly brought this document to my attention. As Kent, *Household,* 6–7, points out, *consorti* had a double meaning of kinsmen and spouses. Whether Fantoni meant kinsmen or, as I have translated it here, spouses, his intention in either case was to signify a descent group traced through the male line.

[49]Carte Strozziane, ser. 2, vol. 17 bis, Ricordi of Marco and Piero Parenti, 1447–1519, fol. 71v. See also the discussion of reverence shown lineal ancestors in Kent, *Household,* 252–73.

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were particularly vulnerable to the weaknesses of domestic organization. Because of these structural problems, the appeal to "all one's dead" may have represented a means of symbolic resolution to the conflicts of daily affairs. In supplicating all their dead ambiguously to include both natal and marital, conjugal and extended families, women encouraged their own inclusion in those kinship groups and definitions. Moreover, in resisting a strict interpretation, the imprecision of *et suorum* allowed wives and daughters both to conceal and symbolize their affection and obligation. The very vagueness of *i suoi* provided the dynamic of choice whereby women donors could symbolically integrate rather than fragment their identity as members of several families.

Much like the family portraits, wedding chests, and diaries of the period, remembering the family through masses celebrated multiple messages about structures of familial, social, and psychological commitment which resist a single reading.[50] What Florentine men and women did with their family memories and personal identities created a complex set of kin models peopled with different characters who opened up various strategic possibilities for self-fashioning. In naming individual and collective recipients of bequests, men of varying status were largely captured by the power of patrilineage in both its practical and idealized forms, leaving behind the rich textures of kinship they actively sustained in other ventures. More attentive to structural possibilities and the accidents of personal experience than their kinsmen, women created family visions through the process of remembrance that at times resisted the powerful shapes of social norms. In exercising personal power within and through the structures of kinship, women not only constructed personal identities as mothers, wives, and daughters, but also became their own authorities on the shape of the social order. Only more case studies and detailed research will tell us how these diverse family models and kin ties slowly shifted over the course of time. Yet the broad survey presented here asks us to rethink the way we, as historians, have framed the history of the family in Renaissance Italy, and prompts us to consider more fully how gender shaped both ideas of kinship and its ideals.

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[50]Hughes, "Representing the Family: Portraits and Purposes in Early Modern Italy," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1986): 7–38.

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